

A dynamic comic book cover for Kirby: Genesis. The central figure is a large, muscular man with a red face and a silver helmet featuring a red star, wearing a red cape. He is shown from the chest up, looking down with a determined expression. A bright, glowing orange and yellow beam of light emanates from his right hand, pointing towards the bottom right. In the background, a futuristic cityscape is visible with various structures and flying vehicles. To the left, a green-skinned alien with a helmet and a gun is shown. To the right, a smaller figure in a red and white suit is visible. The overall color palette is dominated by reds, oranges, and yellows, creating a sense of intense action and energy.

KIRBY: GENESIS

COMIC SHOP NEWS

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Most fans know the incomparable Jack Kirby because of his crucial role in launching the Marvel Age of Comics and his co-creation of the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Thor, Iron Man, Ant Man/Giant Man, the X-Men, the Avengers, and so many other core Marvel characters. Others know him for his Fourth World work at DC, where he created the New Gods, the Forever People, Mister Miracle, and the diabolical Darkseid (perhaps one of the greatest DC villains of all time), among other characters.

But if you think that Kirby's work ended there, you're quite mistaken. In the 1970s and 1980s, Kirby created scores of characters—some as concept drawings, some featured in portfolios, others spotlighted in their own comics from numerous smaller companies. If you haven't met those characters thus far, don't worry—you will very soon, courtesy of Dynamite Entertainment, Alex Ross, and Kurt Busiek.

Kirby: Genesis is an original project spotlighting some of Kirby's most imaginative post-Marvel-and-DC creations. "Kirby: Genesis is an event maxi-series establishing the foundation for this vibrant world featuring many characters created by Jack Kirby—as well as designs that Jack drew—expanded upon by Alex and Kurt," Dynamite publisher Nick Barrucci said. "This is the biggest event that Dynamite has been involved in, and this is one of the most important, if not the most important project of the year, and we are bringing our 'A' game to it."

How'd the opportunity to launch this Kirby project come about, and how involved are the Kirby family in the project? "We went after this project with the Kirby family over three years ago," Barrucci said. "I met with Lisa Kirby and she was wonderful to meet with; she had interest but she didn't want to rush into anything. After a bit of following up, she had me speak with her attorney, Paul Levine; we had a meeting and discussed how we would move forward if we were to work with the Kirbys on this expansive project (there was no guarantee, as Paul was speaking to all of the major publishers to find the right home).

"I should add that Mark Evanier was the person who introduced me to Lisa via e-mail, which made meeting with her and then Paul much easier. Paul actually checked up on us, talked to Mark and a few other people in the industry, and he was happy with what he heard and we moved forward from there. The Kirbys—as well as Mark Evanier, who they trust as he is one of the most knowledgeable persons regarding Kirby and his work—are very involved. They have been fantastic."

Were all of the rights to these characters available from the very beginning, or was some finagling required to get access to the characters who play a role in *Kirby: Genesis*? "We made it very easy for all involved and only used characters that have been owned by Jack, including characters featured in drawings he did them for fun and various other reasons; Alex and Kurt will expand upon them," Barrucci said. "The amazing thing is that Jack was one of the most prolific artists you will have ever met, if not the most prolific the comics industry. His mind never stopped thinking of ideas. In an interview with Jack—and I'll always remember this—he stated that creators should always continue to come up with new characters to expand the market. Jack did it, and he made it look very easy. He set the bar very high for everyone. I think I can comfortably say that it raises our game—Kurt's, Alex's, and Dynamite's—and the project will be better for it, as Jack's characters are just rich with source material to build on."

Did Dynamite land the project and then enlist Ross, or was he part of the plan even before the deal was signed? "Chicken, meat egg," Barrucci joked. "We work so closely with Alex that sometimes it's hard to remember if we spoke before or after! I can tell you that we went after it; I can't remember if Alex was interested from the get-go or if I mentioned it to him later, but he definitely was extremely excited as we pulled this together. He had agreed before the deal was signed (it took a bit from verbally agreeing to finalizing the paperwork—it always does), but I don't remember 100% whether or not he was there before I met with Lisa. If I had to say one way or the other, probably not, I suspect—why mention it to him if it was not going to happen? The most important thing, though, is that once I did discuss it with him, he was 'all in.'"

"I can say that Dynamite and I have been talking about this for close to three years now," Alex Ross added. "It's something I knew they were pursuing first when it seemed to simply mean properties like those previously published by Topps, as well as Jack's two limited series from the '80s, *Silver Star* and *Captain Victory*. I have a passion for all things Kirby, so I was an immediate participant with our shared enthusiasm."

It was Ross, in turn, who enlisted Busiek. "Alex contacted me a few months ago, and he got me interested by saying 'Kirby,' pretty much," Busiek said. "Jack Kirby was the premier creative force in American comics history. And to have the chance to work with his creations in their purest form—some who've been seen before and some who haven't, from the Ninth Men to *Galaxy Green* to *Tiger 21* to *Silver Star*—and to build a new world and a grand story with them is the kind of opportunity and challenge I couldn't possibly turn down. When we started talking about this, there was just so much stuff, so many great ideas, that I was confused as to where we could possibly start. Then, when we were talking about possibilities, he mentioned one image he'd like to see in it, and that one image was enough to make me see a terrific setup for a story arc—a big, splashy cosmic story that'd involve tons of Kirby characters and

Kirby: Genesis—Let There Be Comics!



wonderment, but would still have a very human, emotionally-driven thoroughness bringing it all together. That was all it took to make me say, 'Got it. I see the whole story now. Man, this is going to be fun!' And it is! So stand back—we're gonna need the room!"

So what was that image? "I can't tell you that much, because it's page eight of *Kirby: Genesis* #1, and you know I hate to spoil things—particularly the big moments. I will say that it's an arrival, and that it's the inciting event that sets the whole story in motion. Also, the twelve-page story in the #0 issue is all about setting up that arrival."

"I'll also say that it's a very Busiek/Ross moment. It's Kirby, in that it features Kirby designs and Kirbyesque concepts, but it's also very much Alex's and my sort of thing, because it's about ordinary people confronting the fantastic—seeing cosmic developments from a very human, very Earthbound point of view. It's the moment when our lead human-level characters first encounter the strange and unearthly, and that perspective is very important to the story we're telling, as it is in *Marvels* and *Astro City*.

"And it also features giant, powerful, Kirby figures!"

"Is that vague enough for you?"

As soon as he came on board, Ross took an active role in the "casting" process—deciding which Kirby characters to use, which to sideline, etc. "Before much could be done, we needed to question how far we could go," Ross said. "The more we looked into it, the further it went. There are so many concepts in Jack's artwork, many of which were never fully realized, that no one has developed in a story so far. So many of Jack's single paintings or sketches haven't had this level of creative development applied to them before now."

Most of these characters weren't initially envisioned as part of a single continuity; how difficult has it been to put them together into a cohesive universe and storyline? "I don't think it's any more of a challenge than how so many divergent characters co-exist within the DC or Marvel Universes," Ross said. "Most of Jack's stuff is of a similar, serious timber, so it's easy to cross over his mystical fantasy concepts with his science fiction ones."

"It took some fiddling around to bring them together, but not all that much," Busiek explained. "And not anything of the sort that Kirby didn't regularly do himself. He often took ideas he'd worked up, and tinkered with them and re-jiggered them to fit a new context. For instance, some of what we're working with was part of Kirby's plans for *Devil Dinosaur*, but when those ideas weren't used, he reworked them into something else so he could use them elsewhere. Had he taken them over to DC, he'd have made them fit DC's universe, even though they were built for Marvel in an earlier version."

"As for how much research it was, it varies. The big job was finding everything—or, at least, finding as much as we could. I'm sure there's plenty more that'll turn up over time. But we gathered together as much Kirby-owned material as we could, and started sifting through it. Some of it's fleshed out in detail (like the afore-

mentioned *Silver Star* and *Captain Victory*). Some is pretty detailed, but in other cases all we have are written notes (like Kirby's developmental notes for the *Secret City* characters) or a few pages of comics (as with *Galaxy Green* and *Satan's Six*). Some of it, there's only the art to go one, with maybe a name attached, maybe not."

"In those cases, it wasn't research we needed to flesh them out, it was contemplation and inspiration—looking at the art and asking, 'What does this feel like? How can we build something out of this that's true to what's there?' That was the real creative work, trying to stay true to our sense of Kirby while building new ideas to go with his illustrations."

How long is the first *Kirby: Genesis* story arc, and which characters will play crucial roles in the story? "Including a #0 issue, the initial series runs nine issues," Ross said. "Along the way, there will be launches of splinter projects from those elements introduced. *Galaxy Green*, who have never been finished in a published story before, will become regular characters, as well as *Silver Star* and *Captain Victory* and their supporting casts."

"The lead character is an ordinary human named Kirby," Busiek added. "No relation, and it's his first name, anyway. But the Kirby characters who'll be coming along..."

"There'll be *Captain Victory* and *Silver Star*, of course, those being the two series Kirby did the most work with—fourteen issues of one, six of the other. *Captain Victory* is a tough SF hero, commander of the Galactic Ranger ship the *Dreadnought Tiger*, kicking ass and keeping the peace across the universe. And *Silver Star* is genetically-engineered super-soldier who's been around in the shadows since the Vietnam War—on the face of it, he's a heroic, Captain America type, but his existence raised questions of scientific ethics, evolution, genetic engineering and more. Those are the best-known characters, because they've already had their own comics."

"Beyond that, major roles will be played by *Galaxy Green*, a cadre of gorgeous female manhunters that Kirby did only two pages of comics about, as well as characters Kirby designed for use in *New Gods* but

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never got to; characters he created for a contemplated revamp of *Thor*; and other concepts he came up with over the years but for one reason or another didn't use, including Tiger 21, a name he liked so much he used it at least four times for different ideas, and we're using two of them. And there are characters appearing who are drawn from piece of artwork he did for himself of his family, that were never part of any publishing proposal."

Unused New Gods and Thor concepts? How did those become a part of the project? "Going back to when Jack first started to do some of his own independent artwork in the late '60s/early '70s, there are a lot of prototypes for things he would eventually work on, as well as some that never went anywhere," Ross said. "For example, he portrayed those Norse gods in a painted portfolio that was never developed in comics form; these characters will now make up a corner of our new universe of mythical characters. Unused New Gods concepts—a great many of which have been seen in print over the years—are also ours to play with and develop into their own grouping."

"I hate to give away surprises, so I won't say much about each individual character," Busiek continued, "except to say that there are space heroes, soldiers, cosmic beings, proto-gods, heroes of myth and magic, lost survivors of ancient times, and more. And to give you some names: The Midnight Swan! Thunderfoot, the Half-Human! The Glory Knights! The Phantom Continent! The Mythical Dragonsbane! The Primals! The Wanderer and Spring!"

"And on the bad-guy side of things, you'll see the return or Kirby villains like Darius Drumm and the Lightning Lady, plus newcomers like Sundance, and others besides."

"And looming over it all, the unimaginable menace of — Ah, but that would be saying too much. They're on page 8 of #1, though!"

From the Silver Age on, Kirby seemed to really embrace cosmic and/or metaphysical story elements—he created universes and pantheons, not just characters. Are Ross and Busiek taking the same approach here? "Absolutely," Ross asserted. "We're grouping some of the visual elements that we're pulling together into various groups and associations that Kirby never set up, but that are consistent with much of the work he's created elsewhere."

What event brings these disparate characters together? "We're keeping the details slightly mysterious," Ross said. "Let's just say that something from the hand of Jack Kirby himself is our sparking-off point that opens up this series and opens a doorway into this new universe."

Have Ross and Busiek pored through various Kirby books from the 80s and 90s looking for story elements that they could refine and combine for this series, or are you creating your own overarching story? "Anything that Kirby wrote and drew that we have the ability to work with is considered canon within this universe," Ross stressed. "There's so much to fill in, though, when you're introducing designs and illustrations that would have been full projects for Jack if they had gotten off the ground. Everything we do will attempt to fit in to Kirby's mindset, taking it further into today."

Kirby's *Genesis* is the second high-profile project Busiek and Ross have collaborated on, and a lot has happened since the two produced the



forementioned *Marels*. How has the collaborative process changed since that time? "Not a whole lot, really," Busiek said. "We've kind of just slipped back into it. I think we've got a stronger sense of trust in one another than we did at the start of the process back then, because we've had so much more working experience with one another, and we've both done plenty of work with other people that's shown what we can do. So

I think we're both more likely to defer to each other's sensibilities. But not to the point that we don't make our voices known."

"Just this morning, we talked over some layouts—I'd written an unusual scene in #1, and Alex wasn't convinced it should be drawn the way I described it in the script. So we had a conversation yesterday about the purpose of the scene, and the ideas and atmosphere I was trying to get across, and

Alex went off and did a layout for the page that isn't what I'd described in the script, but does the storytelling job we need to do beautifully, finding a solid common ground between my instincts and his. So we're still going back and forth on stuff, as we did with *Marels*. Just probably not as often."

"And when Alex sends me layouts, they come in e-mail instead of by fax. But it's still two guys talking comics, digressing all over the place as we find the best way to tell the story we both want to tell."

Busiek offered readers a rundown on the creative process involved in the creation of this epic story. "We talked through our initial ideas—who should we use, which Kirby characters should we focus on, how best do we flesh out the Kirby designs and concepts that aren't fully realized yet, how do we have all that unfold in the story we're telling, that sort of thing. And based on those discussions, which happened over a period of months, I worked up a story outline and ran it by Alex and the guys at Dynamite," Busiek said. "So we did another wave of talking the story back and forth, changing some of the characters we'd be using and their relationships with one another, shifting stuff around—eliminating some bits, strengthen others, altering stuff."

"Then I revised the outline, incorporating what we'd talked about, and that's the outline that got approved by everyone up the line. It's a story that Alex and I worked up, with the oversight and suggestions of Joe Rybandt and the other guys at Dynamite. And from there on, I'm producing finished scripts based on the outline we agreed on, fleshing them out and doing the choreography myself. And if Alex has concerns when he gets the scripts, we'll address them as they come up. But taking the outline and working it up into a script, at this stage, is on me."

"That's pretty much how it worked with *Marels*, too. Coming up with the overall story was a lot of batting ideas back and forth, but once the outline was approved, the writing was something I largely did on my own, and we'd revise after that as needed. So far, it's pretty much the same thing here. We'll stay in touch, and talk about changes or new ideas as needed, but the bulk of the co-plotting is represented by that now-approved outline."

While much of Alex Ross's recent work has been focused on writing, he will be both plotting and providing layouts on this book. "This book will appear on a monthly schedule," Barrucci said. "Alex is very quick on the layouts—it's just flowing from him naturally and Jack [Herbert, the finishing artist] is executing the finished pages just as well."

"There will also be some pages fully illustrated by Alex. The select pages he is doing are such passion pages that he is focusing on them. To help as much as possible, he is turning down other work to ensure he can do this on time and give it the kind of care that will stand the test of time. We have some nice lead time that we will be able to offer this on time."

"We're starting with enough lead time that as long as I can deliver a script every six weeks, the project should have no problem coming out monthly," Busiek added. "Barring accidents and

SPIDER-MAN

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acts of God and so forth, but we knew going into this that we'd need some lead time, and Nick has been helpful in making sure we had a slightly looser schedule to accommodate that. And so far, so good!"

"I've been working ahead on covers and, am keeping right in pace with Kurt and Jack with my part of the interior art contributions," Ross said. "Dynamite and I have been talking about many things that could call for artwork of mine to appear blended within a story involving the primary artist; it had to be a good art fit."

Is Ross adapting his layout style to encompass a more Kirbyesque look? After all, Ross's work has always been strongly realistic, while Kirby seemed to stress vitality and exuberant energy over realism. How does he balance the two approaches so that he doesn't lose his own style while trying to evoke Kirby's approach? "That's the fun of it," Ross said. "I'm not changing who I am, but it turns out that we share a whole lot of connecting road that is really fun to travel over. I can pull Kirby's foreshortened perspectives and figure positions into the world of realism without that much difficulty—at least to my tastes! In terms of layout, I'm much more of a post-Neal Adams artist, but I think the two things meet somewhere in the middle on an intellectual level."

To make the first issue particularly appealing for readers, "we're launching this with a 32-page comic priced at \$1—it's a great value for the money! We really want to introduce this Universe to the widest audience possible and doing a 32-page comic for only \$1 is the best way to do it. We've polled a lot of retailers to get their feedback and the majority suggested such."

"There will be eight issues and a prelude," Busiek said. "As I understand it, there'll also be a number of supporting projects showcasing some of the cool characters we're introducing, so they can star in their own features—but those are supporting projects, not part of the main series. *Kirby: Genesis* will be a complete story all by itself, and if there's, say, a *Galaxy Green* series that gets launched along the way, it'll be its own thing as well."

"I want *Kirby: Genesis* to be the beginning of a vast and complex universe, but to be a complete reading experience on its own, as well."

"One thing that Kurt and I have always shared is our love for Jack Kirby's comics and legacy," Ross added. "The *Kirby: Genesis* project is a way to repay the impact this one man's creativity has had in shaping our lives. I'm excited to be plotting this adventure with Kurt as well as to be contributing to some of the interior art. This epic will be an ambitious assembly of every Kirby design we can lay our hands on."

If the first *Kirby: Genesis* project leads to another series, will Busiek still be on board? "I'd never say never—there are some great characters here who'd be a ball to play with—but right now I'm focused n this one. I'm not thinking ahead to what might come afterward."

Any chance that Dynamite will supplement the original series with reprints of early Kirby material that serves as the inspiration for this project? "We do have the rights," Barrucci said, "but right now we're focusing on the main title and the Universe; we'll be following up with the reprint collections somewhere down the line. We have Jack Busiek as the basis for an entire universe. We have Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross to build this saga that features this vast array of Kirby characters from earth and space, and we know they can start a grounded story. What more can you ask for?"

Kirby: Genesis #0, a \$1 comic by Kurt Busiek, Alex Ross, & Jason K. Herbert, is scheduled for May release. In addition to the standard edition will feature cover art by Alex Ross; in addition, there will be a 1:25 incentive featuring a Ross "virgin art" variant cover; a 1:50 featuring a Sean Chen "Kirby: Genesis #1 Sneak Peek" variant cover; a 1:100 featuring a Ryan Sook "Kirby: Genesis #1 Sneak Peek" variant cover; and a 1:200 featuring an Alex Ross "Kirby: Genesis #1 Sneak Peek" variant cover.

by Cliff Biggers

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Everything's More Than Alright at Archie!

Back in 1969, the Archies had a musical hit with the song "Everything's Alright." Now, more than forty years later, everything is more than alright—it's better than ever, in fact!

A lot of Archie's new success can be credited to CEO/publisher Jon Goldwater, son of the legendary publisher/editor John Goldwater, who created the red-headed teen whose name graces the entire comics line. Since taking the helm in 2009, Jon Goldwater has led Archie into many new directions involving new storylines, new characters, and new formats.

If there's one message that Goldwater wants to get across to comics readers, it's this: "It's not the same old Archie any more!"

"Things are different here; things have changed—we're vibrant, revitalized. That's the message we'd like to get out to everyone. There's a tremendous energy at Archie, and I think you can see it in our books."

"I've been at Archie not quite two years now, and this expansion has been in development from day one of my arrival. I want to expand the Archie Universe, harkening back to the great storylines of the 60s and the 70s. We didn't want to be stuck with familiar formulas."

Part of the change that Goldwater helmed included the mega-hit "Archie Gets Married" storyline by Michael Uslan that paved the way for Archie's magazine-sized *Life With Archie: The Married Life*. What inspired Goldwater to venture so far outside of Archie's "safety zone" of high-school themed stories in which very little ever really changed? "Well, I figured, 'Why not have fun with the gang?' You can stretch the limitations, and in doing so, provide a lot of entertainment," Goldwater said. "We want our stories to be as entertaining as possible, while reflecting what's going on in the world today regarding kids, high school life, what they deal with in a day to day basis, and so on. We want to have as much fun as possible and still offer a realistic basis to our stories."

"All of the changes harkens back to our desire for entertainment. 'The Man from R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E.' and our *Twilight* pastiches are things that kids can relate to; 'The Man from R.I.V.E.R.D.A.L.E.' harkens back

to *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* in the sixties, but it can be fun in a tongue-in-cheek way today, even for those who have never seen U.N.C.L.E."

"On a more serious level, we introduced a new gay character in the Archie universe, Kevin Keller. Kevin is a reflection of contemporary high school in that kids are so accepting—by and large, almost totally non-judgmental. The way Dan Parent wrote that storyline and incorporated Riverdale High School into the story was positively brilliant. I was very proud of that story; our employees are very proud; and I think our readers and fans were very enthusiastic about Kevin and the storyline. Kevin is coming back in his own miniseries later this year."



In addition to new storylines, Archie has also enlisted an impressive array of talent, ranging from such established comics veterans as Tom DeFalco and Alex Simmons to film and television talents like producer Michael Uslan and *Robot Chicken* Tom Root. Goldwater said that attracting such talented creators has been surprisingly easy. "It's so gratifying that, when we go knocking on people's doors, they say, 'I'm an Archie fan—do you want time to write something for you?' Of course, we say 'Absolutely.' Now that we've opened the door, we've met some incredible talents who love Archie, and they

want to work with us."

"At Comic Con, met Tom Root, head writer of *Robot Chicken*, and he told us that he was such a fan of Archie Comics; he told me about the *Robot Chicken* homage to Archie, and the next thing you know, Tom and I are talking about a story that eventually became *Jughead* #200."

"So many people love the characters, and we have an amazing group of talented creators—both our regular creators and the special guest creators like Michael Uslan and Tom Root."

In addition to new talent, Goldwater has also led Archie in new publishing directions—hardcovers spotlighting well-known creators and best-selling storylines, as well as more upscale printing for the monthly comics (including heavier, coated paper stock and improved printing). "Our change in packaging—better paper, better color reproduction—was a desire to give value to our customers," Goldwater said. "Someone plunking down their hard earned money on Archie Comics deserves to get the best possible product. So we very consciously made the decision to upgrade, at a substantial cost to Archie comics. We want readers to get the best possible package for their money."

Archie's new magazine format may be the most impressive value the publisher offer, offering more than two full comics' worth of original material in an upscale-format magazine for the same \$3.99 price that many charge for a single comic. "We decided to offer a tremendous value in *Life with Archie: The Married Life*. It cost us a lot to offer two full comics' worth of material in a larger format on better paper—but if you really want to do it, you find a way to do it."

"Why did we do the magazine rather than two comics? The way we look at it here at Archie—we'll, we can't divide Betty and Veronica, for goodness sakes, so the only way to put it together properly was in the format that we're using! No matter which character you prefer, you still want to know what's going on in Archie's other world."

Goldwater felt that the more upscale format better reflected the more sophisticated storylines that *The Married Life* offered, focusing on two possible futures—one in which Archie has married Betty, the other in which he has married Veronica. In both reali-



ties, life is bumpy, with the respective couples facing new challenges and obstacles in their married lives. "We're aware that we're reaching older readers with *The Married Life*, so really making sure that the storylines are fun and vibrant, and they're a little deeper than one might expect from an Archie comic."

The presence of *Tiger Beat*-like features spotlighting *Justin Bieber*, *Twilight*, and other 'teen-oriented subjects struck some as an odd mix, considering the older-skewing storylines. "Initially, we took the *Tiger Beat* approach to appeal to some of the teen readers," Goldwater said, "but in the more recent issues you'll see that we've gotten a little bit away from just the *Justin Bieber* stuff; we've changed it up a little bit. The changes are a little more in line with the direction we feel the series is taking; we're inventing a whole new way of doing business as we go along here, and there'll be some change and development as we progress."

As the series has developed, Archie has added a third feature to *Life With Archie*: a series of single-page stories starring the former Li'l Jinx, now a high school student. "We love the extra content that we're able to offer in the magazines," Goldwater said. "We have to make sure that it flows and fits with the Archie stories; these stories, both in their tone and in their single-page structure, work very well."

One character whose role in *The Married Life* (while understated) is pivotal to the series' development is Dilton Doily. The former science nerd has taken on a role as Archie's equivalent of the Watcher. As *Michael Uslan* revealed in the first issue, Doily is the only character fully aware of the multiple realities in which Archie and his friends exist—and furthermore, he has found a way to travel through these realities, establishing that each is as real as the other. Will Dilton show up again at some point in the story? "Dilton will appear again, and in a significant way—that's all I can tell you," Goldwater said. "And you're right—the potential for Dilton is huge! We're working on a *Dilton Doily* miniseries that we'll then collect in to a graphic novel, in fact."

"As far as those realities are concerned—you're exactly right that we wanted to make them all just as real. When Michael created the bible for the 'Archie Gets Married' series, he had this incredible far-reaching idea when it came to creating the world that Archie and the gang live in. As you say, Dilton is a bit like Archie's Watcher."

The magazine format, along with its storylines that venture into new territory, is expanding in the near future with *Veronica and Betty*, which follows the lovely duo as the travel around the world, meeting new people, experiencing new cultures, and expanding Archie Comics' horizons.

"*Veronica and Betty* will be done in magazine format as well; it may be early next year before it appears, because I want to make sure we give that the proper attention," Goldwater said. "And other magazine-format titles are likely to follow that; we will absolutely keep moving forward into that format as long as it's successful for us. The digest is still our most important current format, because it reaches so many in grocery stores and newsstands. But the magazine format is one that we've created and we want to grow; we want."

Speaking of digests, Archie has also announced that they will offer the first-ever

Archie-DC Comics crossover in digest format later this spring (the original *Tiny Titans/Little Archie* three-issue miniseries was published in comics format by DC). Many assumed that, since DC published the comics, they'd do the trade paperback as well; how did the digest deal come about? "It was my idea for us to package the *Little Archie/Tiny Titans* series in digest format," Goldwater said. "I have to say that I am so happy with the *Little Archie/Tiny Titans* books that I can't tell you; they're terrific fun. The strength of DC is in their comics, but the strength of Archie is in our digests, so we asked to be able to put the story out in that format as well."



Any chance that this might be the first in a series of crossovers? "Well, you never know what the future holds! We love to do crossovers—you may remember that we did that *Archie/Punisher* crossover back in the 90s, so we're not exactly new at this—and if the right idea comes about, it would be great to do it again!"

Of course, many were thrilled at the chance to see Little Archie and gang back again. Are more Little Archie tales in the works? "I have to say that you're getting a little psychic," Goldwater joked. "We're actually talking about moving forward with a regular *Little Archie* story!"

"We're already doing a two-part story in *Archie and Friends* that features Little Archie and some pets with familiar names, like Justin Beaver," Archie's executive director of publicity and marketing Alex Segura added.

"That's right, and we're doing *Archie Babies* as well," Goldwater said. "I think readers are really going to enjoy these stories."

Rather than launching their own line of hardcover reprints of classic and best-selling Archie tales, the publisher chose to work with other publishers with more experience in the hardcover market. How did that decision come about? "We've never done any sort of hardcover reprints like this before, so we wanted to partner with publishers who had more experience in this market," Goldwater explained. "We have this incredible library of comics that encompasses seventy years of material—that's a massive amount of material! IDW and Dark Horse and Abrams do an incredible job with their books, so for us to partner up with them to get some of this material out was a natural. They're big fans of Archie and they wanted to do this right; as I've said already, we're not the same old Archie any more, and we want to make Archie available in a wide variety of formats, including these hardcover editions. This is something that we felt was very important to us. We're rebuilding and rejiggering our current project; we need those partners to get that material into the marketplace and help establish our presence. Going forward, though, we will be publishing some of that material ourselves as well."

Archie is no stranger to superheroes, either, although the most recent comics featuring their superhero characters appeared not under the Archie imprint, but from DC. The publisher licensed Archie's superheroes and offered them as part of a Red Circle line that included character revamps helmed by J. Michael Straczynski. Unfortunately, the line never clicked with readers in the way that DC and Archie had hoped it would, and the books came to an end in late 2010. "The DC license on the Red Circle characters is ending this year, so we'll be getting back that library," Goldwater said. "We've already started moving forward with our own stories starring those characters, and we're hoping to get them into the market in 2012. We're happy with the job that DC did, but we're thrilled to get the library back and offer our own take on these characters."

Archie has also found remarkable success with licensed properties based on the videogame *Sonic the Hedgehog*. "Sonic the Hedgehog has been an incredible success story for us," Goldwater said. "We've had an almost-twenty-year partnership with Sega, and it's been terrific; we hope to keep that going for a long time to come. In addition to the regular monthly *Sonic* titles, we also have the *Sonic Archives*, which have been very successful as a reprint series. I think that it's possible that we might do *Sonic* reprints in full size hardcover at some point in the future as well."

What else is looming on the horizon for Archie? "Well, we've got *Mega Man* is com-

ing up in April; we're thrilled with the book and with our partnership with Capcom. And we have *Stan Lee* comics coming, in conjunction with Stan and *Andy Heyward* at A Squared Entertainment. You'll see the first book previewed at Comic Con in July, with the first issue following in September."

No doubt about it—everything is more than alright at Archie... and that's the way it should be!

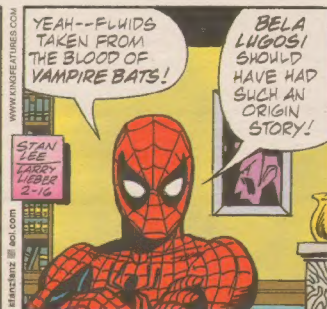
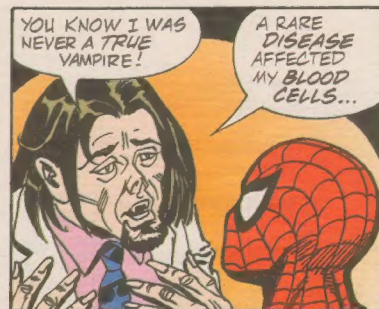
Flashpoint Gets a Booster Shot

In the final page of *Time Masters: Vanishing Point*, Dan Jurgens offered readers their first major clues regarding the upcoming mega-event *Flashpoint*. Now we learn that Jurgens will continue to play in the *Flashpoint* sandbox with the May-release *Booster Gold #44*, which serves as a lead-in to the event miniseries.

The cover offers several clues regarding some of the altered timelines featured in that series.



And speaking of clues, here are some real gems, as featured in DC Direct's listing for its first series of *Flashpoint Action Figures*. "DC Direct's Jim Fletcher, Shawn Knapp, Evan Metcalf, John Santagada, Brian Walters, and Bryon Webster have worked closely with *Flashpoint* writer Geoff Johns' concepts and artist Andy Kubert's designs to bring you four awesome figures based on characters central to the *Flashpoint* story," DC's David





Hyde wrote on DC's blog *The Source*. "Sculptors Derek Miller (Wonder Woman), Karen Palinko (Batman and Flash) and Jonathan Matthews (Cyborg) have captured the energy and excitement that drives *Flashpoint*." As the image verifies, the figures are slated for summer release as DC Direct escalates its action figure production schedule to ensure that figures reach stores while the related limited series are still hot.

CSNsider

- DC has announced new content for *Zatanna* #s 11 & 12; the previously announced contents for #11 will move to #13. Paul Dini, Jamal Igle, & Jon Sibal will do the honors on #11, which finds Zatanna struggling to escape the curse her father placed on the murderous puppeteer Oscar Hampel. Matthew Sturges & Stephane Roux team for *Zatanna* #12, which pits Zatanna against a roughneck named Backlash and his sword that cuts backwards through time.
- Neal Adams' *Batman: Odyssey* #s 7 & 8 will be resolicited; current orders are cancelled.
- David Finch's *Batman: The Dark Knight* #s 4 & 5 will be resolicited; current orders are cancelled.
- DC Direct has cancelled their *Mass Effect Series 2 Action Figures*; they have no plans to resolicit.
- Longtime comics veteran Joe Staton, well known for his work at Marvel and DC as well as his co-creation of the acclaimed *E-Man*, will take over as artist of the *Dick Tracy* newspaper strip beginning in mid-March, when current artist Dick Locher retires. Staton will be joined by writer Mike Curtis.
- DC has announced a June ring promotion tied in with *Flashpoint*. The second issue of the mega-event miniseries will be accompanied by a special *Flashpoint* edition Flash ring. And that's not the only *Flashpoint* promo collectible that DC will offer: there will also be a series of exclusive buttons featuring the reimagined superhero logos of *Flashpoint*, available only through comic shops.
- The previously-announced *Ultimate Comics Spider-Man* #155 Komarck Variant

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has been cancelled.

• *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, one of the most successful videogames of 2009, is spawning a sequel game, *Batman: Arkham City*, this fall. But what happened between the original game and its highly anticipated sequel? That's what Paul Dini & Carlos D'Anda will explore in the six-issue *Batman: Arkham*

City miniseries that debuts in May. The comic picks up a year after the original game, as former Arkham Warden turned newly elected Mayor of Gotham City Quincy Sharp has decided to close down the infamous institution. In its stead, he establishes "Arkham City," the new maximum security "home" for all of Gotham City's

thugs, gangsters and insane criminal masterminds. Set inside the heavily fortified walls of a sprawling district in the heart of Gotham City, inmates can roam free and do whatever they want as long as they don't try to escape. To run this urban prison, Sharp has appointed Dr. Hugo Strange, a man who knows that Bruce Wayne is Batman.

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FF at the Foundation of Marvel's Future

Now that Johnny Storm has flamed off, the FF needs a new member to balance the team—and apparently that new member is none other than Spider-Man! And when Spidey joins the team, the book gets a new title as well: *Fantastic Four* becomes *Future Foundation*!

Of course, Peter Parker's involvement with the FF goes back to the first issue of his

very own series, when he dropped by to see if they might want to hire a new member of the team. Since then, he has become a close friend of the Fantastic Four—so it's only natural that, when one of their own has apparently shuffled off this mortal coil, they might offer him a position on the team. (And Spidey isn't the only surprising new cast member: Marvel also indicates that Spidey will be accompanied by "some top secret members" of the Future Foundation.

Don't think of them as the new Fantastic Four, however: the team will instead be known as the Future Foundation when the series relaunches in March. Jonathan Hickman and Steve Epting will continue to do the honors on the revamped series, while Marko Djurdjevic provides the new costume designs and artists Daniel Acuna and Stan Goldberg supply the variant cover art.

"FF will alter the very fabric of the Marvel Universe," Tom Brevoort, Senior Vice President of

Publishing, said. "Jonathan and Steve have crafted a unique, powerful new series that's going to surprise a lot of fans with its combi-

nation of mind-blowing ideas and visuals." The new team's mission is to "save the Marvel Universe from its greatest threats and prevent future dangers from arising." Marvel said in their solicitation info. "But even with knowledge of what's to come and one of the most powerful teams ever assembled, just what villainous force could stand in their way?"

Future Foundation #1 is slated for late March release; in addition to the regular and variant cover editions, there will also be a blank cover edition.

John Lewis Leads March in 2012

Georgia Congressman John Lewis has signed a publishing agreement with Top Shelf Productions to co-write (with Andrew Aydin) a graphic novel, *March*, that chronicles the personal saga of one man's involvement in the struggle for civil rights.

"I am very pleased to be participating in this effort," Lewis said. "This is something I really wanted to do some years ago and there is no better time to do it than now. It is not just a story of struggle; it is a story of involvement. It shows the ups, the downs, the ins and the outs of a movement."

"It is my hope that this work will be meaningful and helpful to future generations to give many people here in America and around the world the urge, the desire, to seek, to build, their own world, their own future."

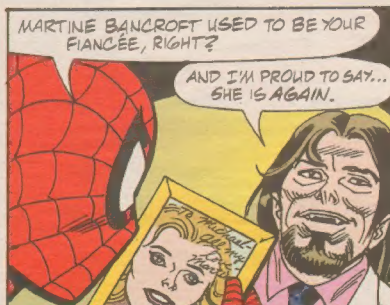
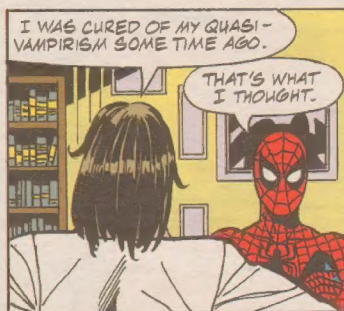
"As a proud resident of Georgia, and a long-time fan of the honorable Congressman," Staros said, "this is truly a deep honor. To bring, not only his life's story, but that of the civil rights movement to the comics medium is truly exciting. This will make this historical and timeless message accessible to an entirely new generation of readers."

No artist has been chosen thus far; once the decision is made, you'll read about it CSN.



Back to Press

- *Fantastic Four #583* 4th Printing (DEC108315), in stores 3/16.
- *Fantastic Four #584* 3rd Printing (DEC108316), in stores 3/16.
- *Fantastic Four #585* 3rd Printing (DEC108317), in stores 3/16.
- *Fantastic Four #586* 3rd Printing (DEC108318), in stores 3/16.
- *Memoir #1* 2nd Printing (DEC108198), in stores this week.



Before the Feature Film, Five Short Subjects...

Looking forward to the upcoming *Green Lantern* film starring *Ryan Reynolds*, slated to debut on June 17th? Well, before you see the film, you can familiarize yourself with the major players via DC's five *Green Lantern Prequel Specials* slated for May release. The creative teams for the oneshots include *Green Lantern* writer and film producer *Geoff Johns*, screenwriter *Michael Goldenberg*, producer/screenwriter *Greg Berlanti*, producer *Donald De Line*, screenwriter *Michael Green*, and screenwriter *Marc Guggenheim*.

- *Green Lantern Prequel Special: Sinestro #1*, by *Geoff Johns*, *Michael Goldenberg*, & *Fernando Dagnino*.
- *Green Lantern Prequel Special: Kilowog #1*, by *Peter Tomasi*, *Adam Schlagman*, *Joe Bennett*, & *Fabrizio Fiorentino*.
- *Green Lantern Prequel Special: Abin Sur #1*, by *Michael Green* & *Karl Kersch*.
- *Green Lantern Prequel Special: Tomar-Re #1*, by *Marc Guggenheim* & *Cliff Richards*.
- *Green Lantern Prequel Special: Sinestro #1*, by *Geoff Johns*, *Greg Berlanti*, *Donald De Line*, & *Jerry Ordway*.

Each 32-page oneshot will feature a movie art cover.

Lee Bermejo Takes a Bat-Holiday

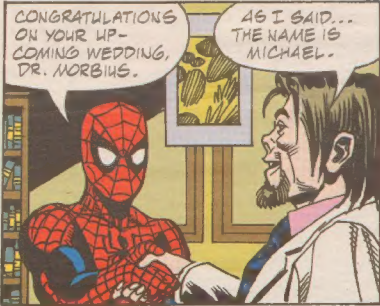
No, we don't mean he's taking the Christmas season off! Instead, *Lee Bermejo*—the acclaimed artist of the best-selling graphic novel *Joker*—is writing and illustrating his own original holiday-themed graphic novel, *Batman: Noel*. DC describes the graphic novel (which marks Bermejo's writing debut) as "a holiday tale... with a twist."

"I'm totally excited by this project," editor and DC VP of Art Direction and Design *Mark Chiarello* said, "and not



only because *Lee Bermejo* is such an astounding artist. Sure, the work he's done in the past (the *Joker* original graphic novel, the Superman story in *Wednesday Comics*) has been pretty brilliant and I'd expect nothing less from Lee, but the added bonus of *Batman: Noel* being drawn and written by Lee is extra cool. In other words, I knew Lee could deliver the goods artistically, but I never knew he was also this great of a writer!"

Look for *Batman: Noel* later this year.



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Cover by **DAVID MACK**
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